



# READY TO BE A THOUGHT LEADER? TOOLKIT

How to Increase Your  
Influence, Impact, and Success

Designed to Accompany and Amplify the Ideas in *Ready to Be a Thought Leader?* (Wiley)

**DENISE BROSSEAU**

# HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

## GETTING STARTED

This workbook is designed to accompany and supplement the book, *Ready to Be a Thought Leader?* (Wiley, 2014) by Denise Brosseau. You'll find worksheets for many of the ideas and exercises in the book. Start with the overview on pages 2-5, then jump in to the worksheets. Skip around as needed.

## CHAPTER 1

**Worksheet 1.1 -- Identify Your Niche** (page 5): Use this worksheet to identify an arena where your interests, expertise, credibility, and commitment align — your Thought Leadership Intersection Point. If you can narrow and select just one, you'll move more quickly through the other exercises in this Toolkit. You can always change your mind later, but it's important to get started. Don't be discouraged if you've just begun. Instead, use the questions as a guide to show you the road ahead. (See book pages 21-29)

**Worksheet 1.2 --What Are The Reasons To Believe?** (page 6): Establishing credibility in any niche requires a commitment to or passion for that arena, as well as expertise and credentials. Use this worksheet in conjunction with the previous one to refine your niche. (See page 26)

**Worksheet 1.3 -- Define Your What If? Future** (page 7): A *What If? Future* (WIF) is a single, simple, striking description or image of the future you want to see. An inspiring WIF can attract followers and galvanize them to take action. Defining your WIF is an iterative process. Your goal is to craft a compelling set of words or images that enrolls other people in the future you envision. (See book pages 29-32)

**Worksheet 1.4 and 1.4a – Context Map** (pages 8 and 9): Understanding the context you are operating in and aligning to the trends around you will allow you to both be more effective and gain followers more quickly. Use this worksheet to think through trends, what is happening in the overall landscape, and what the uncertainties are ahead. There is an example on the following page to help guide your efforts. (See book pages 34-38)

**Worksheet 1.5 – Who Do You Stand With?** (page 10): As thought leaders, we often stand for or work on behalf of others—our tribe. These could be groups of people (e.g., children) or entities (our community or the planet). Use this worksheet to think through who you stand for and what their key issues are, as well as who else might be standing for and working for the same tribe. (See book pages 25)

## CHAPTER 2

**Worksheet 2.1 – Test Your Ideas** (page 11): In order to bring about your *What If? Future*, you'll need to decide what role you will play. Use this worksheet to identify the people who will help you narrow and hone your ideas in order to select the path you will take. (See book pages 55-60 and 75-77)

**Worksheet 2.2 – Gain Additional Feedback & Buy-In** (page 12): One of the wonderful things about new ideas is that there are always a lot of people who are willing to weigh in. Here are some additional options for finding the feedback you need. (See book pages 65-68)

## CHAPTER 3

**Worksheet 3.1 – Map Your Ecosystem** (page 13): Use this worksheet to document your network today and begin thinking about what will be needed as you build out your community. (See book pages 55-60 and 75-77)

**Worksheet 3.2 – What's In It For Them?** (page 14): What motivates others to join your efforts? Once you understand the range of reasons why someone might be willing to join your camp, you can use that information to craft the right message. (See book pages 77-82)

**Worksheet 3.3 – Overcome Objections** (page 15): Most thought leaders are trying to change people's mindsets AND their behaviors. To do that, we have to overcome others' objections and bring them on board. Use this worksheet in conjunction with the **Message Template** to begin to think through how you'll go about this in the weeks and months ahead. (See book pages 82-84 and 169-170)

**Worksheet 3.4 and 3.4a – Message Template** (page 16-17): Defining a message that clearly articulates your point of view and engages people to get on board is one of the most important activities of your thought leadership journey. Use this template to think through what you want to say and how to address the questions others might ask. (See book pages 86-89 and 96-98)

## CHAPTER 4

**Worksheet 4.1 – Build Your Personal Board of Directors** (page 18): Everyone needs a team of people – a Personal Board of Directors – who can provide support for their thought leadership journey. Use this worksheet to think through who is on your team today and what you can do to expand and utilize your personal board in the year ahead. (See book page 117)

## CHAPTER 5

**Worksheet 5.1 – Develop a Visual Framework** (page 19): The essential difference between leaders and thought leaders is often the latter's ability to distill their know-how into a replicable model so that others can be inspired and empowered to expand on what they have accomplished. You will use this worksheet to begin to distill your own framework, blueprint or methodology. (See book pages 134-144)

## CHAPTER 6

**Worksheet 6.1 and 6.2- Define Your Audience and Avatar** (pages 20 and 21): As you begin to think about spreading your message, use these worksheets to better define the demographics and psychographics of your audience(s) and the specific type of person within those audiences that you are targeting. (See book pages 151-153)

**Worksheet 6.3a , 6.3b - Define Your Thought Leadership Brand Voice** (page 22-24): The best brand reputation for a thought leader is being transparent, discoverable, likeable, and trusted -- being someone who provides value to others. These worksheets will help you define your own brand voice and that of your competitors. (See book pages 153-155)

**Worksheets 6.4 – 6.6 - Set Your Strategy, Choose Your Channels, Define Your Social Media Plan** (page 25-27): There are multiple venues for sharing your ideas and expertise. Selecting the right one is a combination of understanding where your audiences expect to find you and identifying those that are a fit with your strategy. Use these worksheets to decide how you will establish yourself as a credible, trusted resource to your community. (See book pages 160-166)

## CHAPTER 7

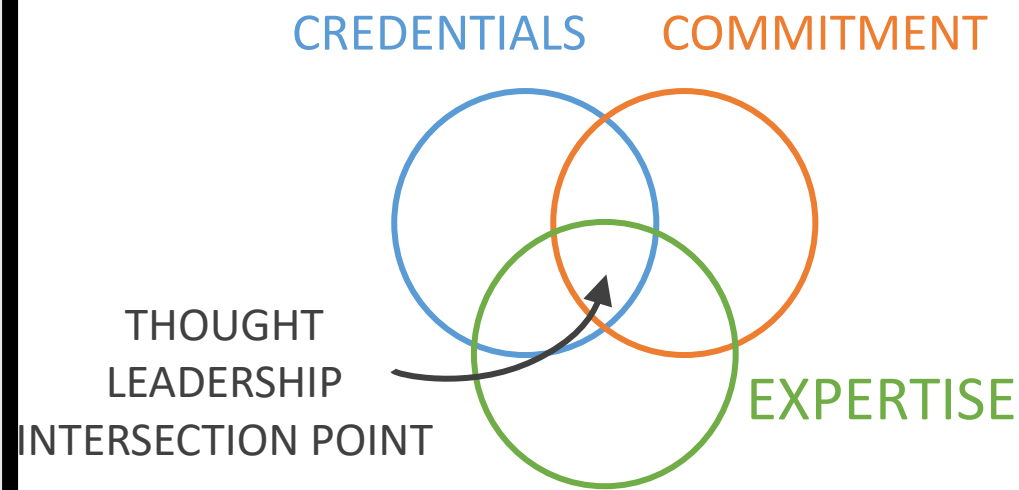
**Worksheet 7.1 – Set Goals To Measure Your Progress** (page 25): The journey from leader to well-respected thought leader does not happen overnight. We must simultaneously build our credibility, eminence and followership. To stay motivated and on track, use this worksheet to develop a few goal posts along the way. (See book pages 183-186)

# READY TO BE A THOUGHT LEADER? 7 STEPS TO INCREASE YOUR INFLUENCE, IMPACT & SUCCESS

## 1) FIND YOUR DRIVING PASSION



Thought leadership starts with focus and passion. You will be far more effective if you identify the one arena where your interests, expertise, credibility, and commitment align—your “thought leadership intersection point.” Next you will craft a clear *What If?* future, a possible future that you are committed to bring about. When you identify and align to key trends, you will gain momentum and be well on your way to make a significant difference, not only in your company or community but across your industry or niche.



## 2) BUILD YOUR RIPPLES OF INFLUENCE

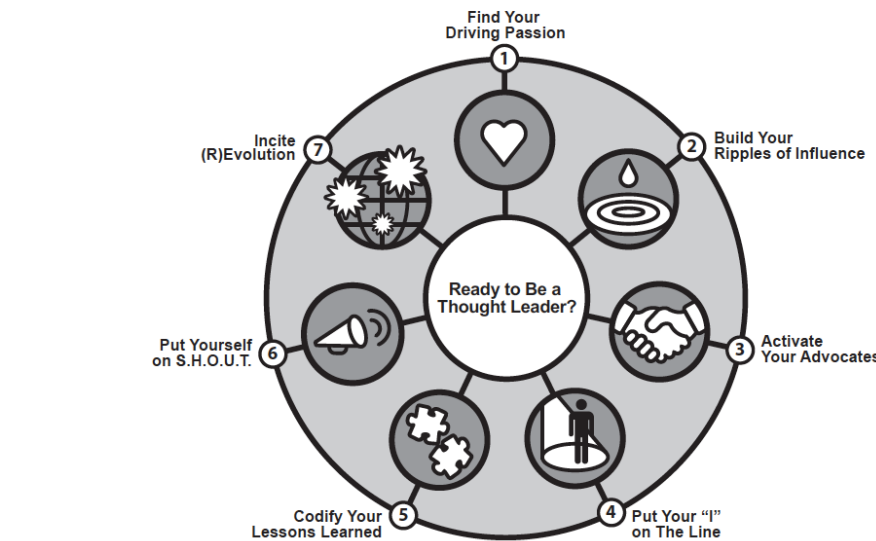


To build your first ripples of change, you’ll test your ideas and opinions (often not yet fully baked) with knowledgeable stakeholders—colleagues, mentors, and friends—gather their input, and continually refine your thinking. By listening to what resonates, you will distill many different points of view into the kernel of a transformative idea that will bring about the *What If?* future you envision. Those conversations will also inform you how to position and leverage your message to tell a bigger story that gets your first followers on board.

## 3) ACTIVATE YOUR ADVOCATES



To expand your influence beyond your existing team or organization will require that you attract supporters and well-connected advocates. These might include community leaders, industry spokespeople, analysts, journalists, research groups, or national partners who can champion your product, program, initiative, or idea to a much broader set of audiences. By articulating what’s in it for them, you create real momentum for change and move your message out of the reach of naysayers and the people determined to stop any transformation in its tracks.



## 4) PUT YOUR ‘I’ ON THE LINE



To build sustainable momentum for a new idea requires someone to show the way, someone willing to step into the limelight and say “follow me.” This requires that you “put your ‘I’ on the line”—overcoming any self-imposed limits to standing front and center. It also may require risking your reputation to espouse a new direction or vision of the future, often long before others agree with your point of view.

It also requires building some skills (ex: communication, engagement), behaviors (ex: regularly create content) and a few allies or a thought leadership tribe that will support and sustain you.

## 7) INCITE (R)EVOLUTION



Has the transformation you’ve envisioned and worked towards begun to take hold? By auditing your progress, you ensure that you are gaining traction for your ideas locally, regionally, nationally, and even internationally. As you accelerate and amplify your voice, you’ll increase your influence, expand your impact, and build a sustainable community of followers that will carry forward your efforts. Along the way, it’s necessary to prevent burnout as you bring about the evolutionary and even revolutionary change that will be your legacy.

## 6) PUT YOURSELF ON S.H.O.U.T.



To increase your credibility, strategic visibility, and reputation and gain recognition as a thought leader, you will have to get the word out about your activities, efforts, and lessons learned. You’re not a thought leader if no one knows anything about you or what you’ve accomplished. This requires being “discoverable” and connecting with and engaging those who can build on your ideas.

## 5) CODIFY YOUR LESSONS LEARNED



The essential difference between leaders and thought leaders is often the latter’s ability to distill their know-how into a replicable model so that others can be inspired and empowered to expand on what those leaders have accomplished. By codifying, testing, and refining a repeatable and scalable blueprint, others will be empowered to align to your efforts and follow in your footsteps.

# MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS TO DATE

Today's date:

## ASSESSMENT

Thought leadership is made up of a lot of different building blocks; you may find you've already made considerable headway in some areas, while in others you are just beginning. Below is an assessment matched with each of the steps and chapters in the book; it will give you a baseline of where you stand today as well as an overview of what you'll be learning in each step.

### CHAPTER 1: FIND YOUR DRIVING PASSION

- I can clearly define my thought leadership niche—where I want to be the recognized “go to” person.
- I have a clear view of the future that I'd like to see and bring about.
- I focus on big ideas that inspire and engage others.
- I understand the key trends in my industry or field and align my efforts with those trends.

### CHAPTER 2: BUILD YOUR RIPPLES OF INFLUENCE

- I am able to distill my knowledge, know-how, or past experiences into the kernel of a transformative idea.
- I test my thinking regularly, even newly hatched ideas, in order to find and build even bigger possibilities.
- I have a loyal group of friends, colleagues, or coworkers, past and present, that can and will help me test and implement a new project or initiative.
- I participate in many forums where I can exchange ideas with a wide variety of people inside and outside my organization; I regularly listen to others' points of view and lessons learned and integrate them with my own.

### CHAPTER 3: ACTIVATE YOUR ADVOCATES

- I have built a program, project, product, or initiative that has the potential to scale beyond what I can do on my own.
- I enjoy and have the skills to enroll others to adopt my vision of the future and join my team.
- I understand how to build incremental engagement—not just to bring people on board but to get them to advocate my position.
- I have many well-known and well-respected advocates willing to champion my point of view broadly, and I am effective at activating them.

### CHAPTER 4: PUT YOUR “I” ON THE LINE

- I believe my ideas are worth sharing.
- I am comfortable stepping into the limelight; I'm not afraid to speak up and share what I know in public forums (in person and online).
- I will risk my reputation, if necessary, to move my ideas or the needs of the community I stand for forward.
- I have put in place support structures to help me move forward despite any naysayers, credit-stealers, and personal challenges that may arise.

### CHAPTER 5: CODIFY YOUR LESSONS LEARNED

- I have distilled my experiences and crafted them as universal life lessons that can inform, inspire, and catalyze others to take action.
- I have developed a blueprint, methodology, or framework that others can follow to replicate what I have achieved.
- I have measurable, actionable, and verifiable evidence that proves my ideas are valid and can be replicated.

- I have tested, iterated, and packaged my blueprint into intellectual property that assures its successful replication.
- I have protected my intellectual property with licenses, trademarks, copyrights, or other safeguards in order to maintain the integrity of what's been created.








### CHAPTER 6: PUT YOURSELF ON S.H.O.U.T.

- I have honed my writing and speaking skills so that people want to listen to and get on board with what I have under way.
- I have followers that I communicate with regularly (email, newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) to share resources and lessons learned in order to scale my efforts and initiatives.
- I think about and manage my personal and social brand and guarantee that I am “discoverable.”
- I have a book, white paper, talk, blog, or website where my ideas are codified and through which I inspire others to get on board.
- I attend or convene meetings, roundtables, or conferences, and I speak and network with potential clients, customers, and even critics.

### CHAPTER 7: INCITE (R)EVOLUTION

- I regularly audit my impact to see who is commenting, forwarding, re-tweeting, or adopting my point of view.
- I see evolutionary and even revolutionary transformation that has come about as a result of my efforts and those of my followers.
- I have identified ways to pass the baton to fans and followers (books, licensed programs, train the trainers, legislation, or regulations).
- I regularly rest and renew to ensure that I don't burn out.

# MAIN ELEMENTS BY CHAPTER FROM *READY TO BE A THOUGHT LEADER?*

<p><b>OVERVIEW:</b></p> <p>As you progress through the workbook, these are the key elements, decisions and questions that you will begin to answer. Use this sheet to compile all of the information in one place.</p>	<p><b>2) BUILD YOUR RIPPLES OF INFLUENCE</b> </p> <p>STAKEHOLDERS...</p> <p>MESSAGE/IDEA TO TEST...</p> <p>HOW I WILL GET FEEDBACK...</p>	<p><b>3) ACTIVATE YOUR ADVOCATES</b> </p> <p>SUPPORTERS/CHAMPIONS...</p> <p>WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM...</p> <p>KEY MESSAGE(S)...</p>
<p><b>1) FIND YOUR DRIVING PASSION</b> </p> <p>THOUGHT LEADERSHIP NICHE...</p> <p>REASONS TO BELIEVE:</p> <p>CREDENTIALS...</p> <p>I SHOW COMMITMENT BY...</p> <p>EXPERTISE...</p> <p>WHAT IF? FUTURE IS...</p> <p>KEY TRENDS...</p>	<p><b>6) PUT YOURSELF ON S.H.O.U.T.</b> </p> <p>AUDIENCE(S):</p> <p>AVATAR:</p> <p>BRAND VOICE:</p> <p>STRATEGY:</p> <p>CHANNELS:</p>	<p><b>4) PUT YOUR 'I' ON THE LINE</b> </p> <p>WHAT HOLDS ME BACK...</p> <p>I OVERCOME THIS BY...</p>
<p><b>7) INCITE (R)EVOLUTION</b> </p> <p>I TRACK MY PROGRESS BY...</p> <p>I PREVENT BURN-OUT BY...</p>		<p><b>5) CODIFY YOUR LESSONS LEARN</b> </p> <p>MY BLUEPRINT OR VISUAL FRAMEWORK...</p>

# WORKSHEET 1.1: PEN YOUR VENN

Today's date:

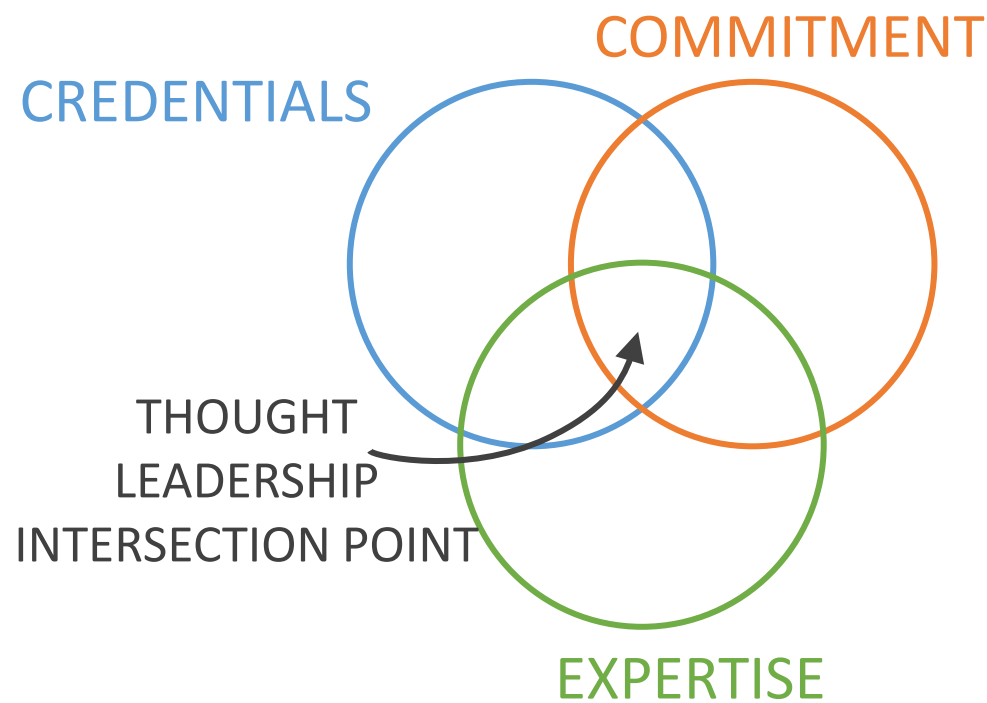
## OVERVIEW:

If you have worked in one field for a long time, your niche may already be fairly well established—particularly if you have built a distinguished track record or created a body of work in one arena. But if you've never really thought of your career from the perspective of thought leadership (or if you recently entered or want to enter a new arena), use the following Pen Your Venn exercise to identify your niche.

You will be far more effective if you can identify one arena where your interests, expertise, credibility, and commitment align — a Thought Leadership Intersection Point.

At right, start by identifying a few areas that you are passionate about. Then answer the questions below. Use additional sheets as needed until you have identified a good starting point – one or two possible intersection points. Test these final selections with a few close associates. Would they have chosen that arena for you? Can they add anything to the reasons to believe in you?

Continue to hone your niche as you gain more expertise and followers.



## ONE ARENA I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT:

Where do you devote your time? What group of people do you stand for and with? What can you speak at length about? What topic are you drawn to?

What experiences, expertise, know-how, and credentials make you believable as the best person (or one of the best) to speak out about this topic?

Is there a large and preferably growing interest/ trend in this arena -- in your company, industry, or region? Be specific.

Are you (or could you be) one of the first or few to be known in this niche?

Is there a real problem in this arena that you want to solve or a challenge that you have the unique skills to address? What is it?

Do you have a distinct point of view that is unique or counter to the expected wisdom? What is it?

## SECOND ARENA I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT:

Where do you devote your time? What group of people do you stand for and with? What can you speak at length about? What topic are you drawn to?

What experiences, expertise, know-how, and credentials make you believable as the best person (or one of the best) to speak out about this topic?

Is there a large and preferably growing interest/ trend in this arena -- in your company, industry, or region? Be specific.

Are you (or could you be) one of the first or few to be known in this niche?

Is there a real problem in this arena that you want to solve or a challenge that you have the unique skills to address? What is it?

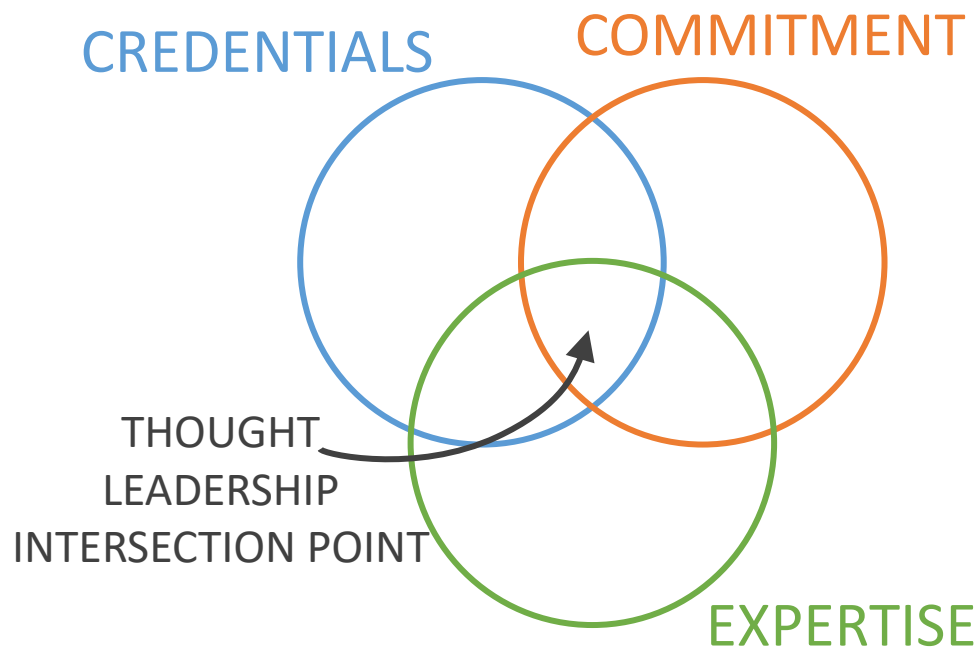
Do you have a distinct point of view that is unique or counter to the expected wisdom? What is it?

# WORKSHEET 1.2: WHAT ARE THE REASONS TO BELIEVE?

Today's date:

My thought leadership niche is:

Once you've selected a thought leadership niche, it is important to think through what evidence you have that will support your credibility in that arena. What proof can you offer that substantiates your expertise and commitment? Use the questions on this worksheet to begin to develop this proof.



## CREDENTIALS:

What degrees, certifications, have you earned?

What brands and/or reputable companies have you worked for?

What industries have you worked in? What roles have you held?

What classes are you taking? What are you studying?

## COMMITMENT:

How have you devoted your time to this niche (e.g., hobbies, reading, serving on a committee, volunteer work, podcasts, learning trips)?

What can you speak at length about? What topic are you drawn to?

Is there a real problem that you want to solve or a challenge you want to take on?

Is there a group of people that you stand for and with?

## EXPERTISE:

What skills or talents have you developed?

Is there a topic/arena where you've become known? Do others call you to get your advice or counsel around one topic area?

Have you gotten your expertise through your life circumstances or the "school of hard knocks"? That counts, too! Add details below.

Studies have shown that the hours we spend doing one thing make us the expert. Is there one thing you've done/studied for hundreds of hours?

My *What If?* Future is:

## IGNITE:

All thought leaders need a *What If?* Future (WIF). A WIF is a single, simple, striking description or image of the future you want to see. An inspiring WIF can attract followers and galvanize them to take action.

For example:



### MARIA MONTESSORI

Creator of Montessori education

How would the world change if we created classrooms where children are rewarded for independence of thinking and acting?



### ROBIN CHASE

Founder and former CEO of Zipcar, the world's largest car-sharing service, and Buzzcar, a peer-to-peer car rental company; author, Peers, Inc.

What would the world look like if we replaced the industrial economy with a collaborative economy?



### MICHAEL POLLAN

Author of *Omnivore's Dilemma - The Secrets Behind What You Eat* and *In Defense of Food*; activist, journalist

What if we thought sustainably about the food we grow and eat so that we care equally about people and planet?

## ACTIVITY:

In the space below, use words or an image to describe your *What If?* Future.

*Keep in mind that this is just a starting point. Defining your WIF is an iterative process. Your goal is to craft a compelling set of words or images that enrolls other people in the future you envision.*

## USE THESE QUESTIONS TO SPARK YOUR IMAGINATION:

What future do I envision that others don't yet see?

What future am I committed to making happen?

If I could make one change in the world, it would be...

What will I work to eradicate?

What legacy do I want to leave?



# WORKSHEET 1.4: CONTEXT MAP

Today's date:

## TRENDS:

Aligning your efforts with emerging trends can inspire and inform your What If? Future. It can also help you overcome the natural resistance to change, whether in your audience, in the larger world, or in your own thinking. Which trends will you align to?

TREND:

TREND:

TREND:

## COUNTERTRENDS:

Being counterintuitive or the dissident voice will definitely help you stand out and get noticed. People won't necessarily agree with you, and that's fine too. Those who buck existing trends often make the most progress—they help people question the status quo and view things in a new light. Which trends will you work against?

TREND:

TREND:

TREND:.

## LANDSCAPE:

How is technology going to impact your efforts? At what speed will new technologies begin to have an impact? What advancements are needed to ensure your efforts will be successful?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

How does today's political landscape impact your efforts? What regulatory or legislative changes are under way?

- 
- 
- 

What economic factors are (or will) impact your efforts?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

What social trends at the local, regional, national or global level might impact your efforts?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

*Keep in mind that this is just a starting point. Regularly re-think how changing trends might impact the efforts you have underway.*

## UNCERTAINTY:

What uncertainty lies ahead? How might that impact your efforts?

## YOUR TRIBE:

Think about the group of people that you stand with and for. What are their needs? How can you support them? When we stand for and with others, they will stand for and with us.

## TRENDS:

Aligning your efforts with emerging trends can inspire and inform your What If? Future. It can also help you overcome the natural resistance to change, whether in your audience, in the larger world, or in your own thinking. Which trends will you align to?

### TREND: **Future of Work/Gig Economy**

*40% of workers will not be employed in a company by 2020. Thus being discoverable is critical to being hired.*

### TREND: **Disintermediation of the Media**

*Increasing ability to create your own voice online & establish your expertise.*

### TREND: **Distrust of the Media**

*As established media voices lose credibility, more chance for individuals to build own trust online.*

## COUNTERTRENDS:

Being counterintuitive or the dissident voice will definitely help you stand out and get noticed. People won't necessarily agree with you, and that's fine too. Those who buck existing trends often make the most progress—they help people question the status quo and view things in a new light. Which trends will you work against?

### TREND: **Everyone can be a thought leader**

*Disagree with this. Create following to scale good ideas, not to showcase you or build your ego.*

### TREND: **Thought leadership requires a social media presence**

*Disagree with this. Many ways to establish yourself as a thought leader without going online.*

## LANDSCAPE:

How is technology going to impact your efforts? At what speed will new technologies begin to have an impact? What advancements are needed to ensure your efforts will be successful?

- *Growth & diversity social media tools and platforms will be increasingly challenging for people to keep up with.*
- *Writing and distributing quality content and getting notice above the noise will get increasingly harder.*
- *As jobs get automated, standing out from the crowd will count.*

How does today's political landscape impact your efforts? What regulatory or legislative changes are under way?

- *Distrust of the media under this administration is getting worse. This is an opportunity and a challenge.*
- *As budgets for arts/science/education get cut, it will be increasingly important to build your own followers to gain \$\$.*
- *As we continue to lose control of our private information, people may steer further away from social media platforms.*

What economic factors are (or will) impact your efforts?

- *If the economy goes into a tailspin, hard for people to focus on thought leadership efforts; yet increasingly important to do so.*
- *Funding for thought leadership may decrease with bad economy.*
- *Harder for me & my clients to sell books, speaking, consulting in bad economy.*

What social trends at the local, regional, national or global level might impact your efforts?

- *Companies need to gain trust; thought leadership helps them do so.*
- *Building social/political/economic movements requires thought leadership skills.*
- *Attracting and retaining the top talent requires focusing on developing their skills and expertise. Organizations can develop them as thought leaders.*

*Keep in mind that this is just a starting point. Regularly re-think how changing trends might impact the efforts you have underway.*

## UNCERTAINTY:

What uncertainty lies ahead? How might that impact your efforts?

*The new administration's budget priorities, saber rattling and general disdain for experts and the media all create an uncertain time for my clients, my ideas and the work I care about.*

*Helping people to see the value of a thought leadership culture is as yet unproven. Will companies be willing to spend \$ to develop their staff as thought leaders?*

*People may be concerned that taking a stand and positioning themselves with a distinct point of view is dangerous for themselves and their organization. Have to be able to prove otherwise.*

## YOUR TRIBE:

Think about the group of people that you stand with and for. What are their needs? How can you support them?

*I stand for and with change agents who need to build a following around their ideas – executives, entrepreneurs, non-profit leaders.*

*I stand for diverse voices who do not have a seat at the table.*

*I stand for women leaders by helping companies establish a thought leadership culture. If I can help them to develop and retain talent, this might give more chances for women to advance.*

*I stand for those leading change in causes I care about – education, water supply, community leadership, women's rights, etc.*

# WORKSHEET 1.5: WHO DO YOU STAND WITH?

Today's date:

## YOUR COMMUNITY:

As thought leaders, we often stand for others, working on their behalf. This could be for a literal group of people (ex: children) or we could work on behalf of our community, city, state, country, or even the planet. Think about who or what you stand with and for.

GROUP/ENTITY 1:

GROUP/ENTITY 2:

GROUP/ENTITY 3:

## ISSUES/NEEDS:

Often, the group we are representing or speaking for has a few key issues that matter most. What are the key issues for your community?

ISSUE/NEED:

ISSUE/NEED:

ISSUE/NEED:

## REPRESENTATIVES OF MY COMMUNITY:

We can be far more effective when we are working for or on behalf of specific individuals rather than for an amorphous group/entity. Is there someone you know or could get to know who is a representative of the community you want to represent? [Note: This is not always possible but do your best to select a representative of each group/entity on the left.]

REPRESENTATIVE:

REPRESENTATIVE:

REPRESENTATIVE:

## FOLLOWERS:

Those who might want to engage with us and become followers of our ideas may be members of our community, but they may also be representatives of a much broader group of people. What other groups might be attracted to your work?

GROUP/ENTITY 1:

GROUP/ENTITY 2:

GROUP/ENTITY 3:

## OTHERS SERVING MY COMMUNITY:

To bring about our *What If* Future usually requires us to work with others, aligning our efforts in order to make a real impact. Who else might be working on behalf of your community? Think broadly – there could be people or organizations working in adjacent fields that you could align with as well as those who are working in your exact niche that you could collaborate with or learn from .

INDIVIDUAL:

INDIVIDUAL:

GROUP/ORGANIZATION:

GROUP/ORGANIZATION:

How might you align with the efforts they have underway?

*Keep in mind that this is just a starting point. Regularly revisit this worksheet as you expand your knowledge and connections.*

# WORKSHEET 2.1: TEST YOUR IDEAS

Today's date:

After you've selected your niche and crafted your *What If?* Future, now you have to decide what role you will play in bringing this future about. To do that, you'll engage with stakeholders who can help you identify and narrow your options until you find one that feels 'just right'. To use this worksheet, start on the right and draft three possible options. Then, below, think through who you can test your ideas with. Who might help you hone your ideas, message, and even help you get started?

<b>CHAMPIONS</b> (Who might put their reputation on the line for you and your efforts?)	<b>INNER CIRCLE</b> (Who can you trust to help you craft your message & strategy?)	<b>ALLIES</b> (Who is ready and willing to roll up their sleeves and do the heavy lifting?)
<b>COLLEAGUES</b> (Whose efforts are aligned with yours?)		<b>ADVERSARIES</b> (Who disagrees with you or is working against you?)

## WHAT ARE 3 WAYS YOU MIGHT BRING ABOUT YOUR *WHAT IF* FUTURE?

For example, are you building a new product, service, curriculum, company, non-profit, event or community? Are you adopting a framework from another industry? Replicating something someone else has already done? Identify three options to explore, test and iterate with others and what questions you need to answer before you choose between them.

OPTION 1:

OPTION 2:

OPTION 3:

One of the wonderful things about new ideas is that there are always a lot of people who are willing to weigh in with their thoughts, caveats, issues, and concerns—as well as their suggestions, recommendations, and modifications. Here are a few more ideas on how to get feedback on a new idea and broaden buy-in . Think through how each of these ideas might work in your situation, then narrow down to a few on the right.

## ASK YOUR FOLLOWERS

**EMAIL:** Do you have an email list or group of friends and colleagues? Send an email asking for their feedback.

**SURVEY:** Use a survey tool to draft a short survey asking for input and post it on your social media or website or ask your friends and followers to complete it.

## ASK YOUR COMMUNITY

**HOST A LISTENING TOUR:** Just as politicians “go on the road” to hear from their constituencies, can you identify communities that might have an interest in your ideas or from whom you need to hear? Take yourself to your stakeholders and create a safe environment for them to voice their views and hear your ideas. *Who are the key leaders in your community that could host a listening tour for you? Which stakeholders should be invited?*

**HOST A FOCUS GROUP OR CONVENING:** Curate a small group of your target audience and bring them together in a one-off focus group format. Craft a set of questions you need answers to as you make critical decisions on your next steps. This can be done by phone, videocall, or in person.

**HOST AN EDITING PARTY OR WRITING GROUP** Writing a book? Ask your friends to come together for dinner & wine and each review a few chapters and give you their input. Alternatively, create a writing group that can help you along the way.

**INNOVATION CHALLENGE:** Send out an open call for solutions to a wide variety of networks. Outline what you're looking for and offer a prize to recognize those whose solutions are adopted. *How might you use an innovation challenge to further your efforts?*

## BUILD A TEST CASE

**PRETOTYPE:** Create a mock-up of your proposed product or service that you can quickly and inexpensively iterate in order to finalize all of the design before spending real money to build a prototype. Prototyping can take many forms – a picture, a block of wood or a video animation.

**PROTOTYPE:** Create a working model of a proposed product or service to test market with potential “customers” and find out if there is a market need.

## COLLABORATE

**USE PARTICIPATORY DESIGN:** Actively involve all the stakeholders (employees, partners, customers, citizens, end users) in the design process through collaborative working or brainstorming sessions. *How could you bring together people you know from a variety of diverse backgrounds to share their expertise?*

**CROWDSOURCE:** While participatory design brings together people you know with strategic skill sets that complement your own, crowdsourcing brings together people you may or may not know who share your job title or area of expertise. Together, you co-create (or crowdsource) the best ideas to bring together a final product or service. *Who are the top practitioners in your particular niche? How could you gather their best ideas for the benefit of all?*

**CREATE A FACULTY:** When you are championing change on a national scale, especially if you are moving quickly, one effective strategy is to create a national faculty. When your faculty includes already well known and respected community leaders, you are far more likely to gain people's attention and buy-in.

## WHAT ARE 3 WAYS YOU MIGHT GAIN FEEDBACK, PERSPECTIVES OR BUY-IN?

Select one of the options on the left and begin to make a plan for who might want to get involved and what's needed to take the next step.

OPTION 1:

OPTION 2:

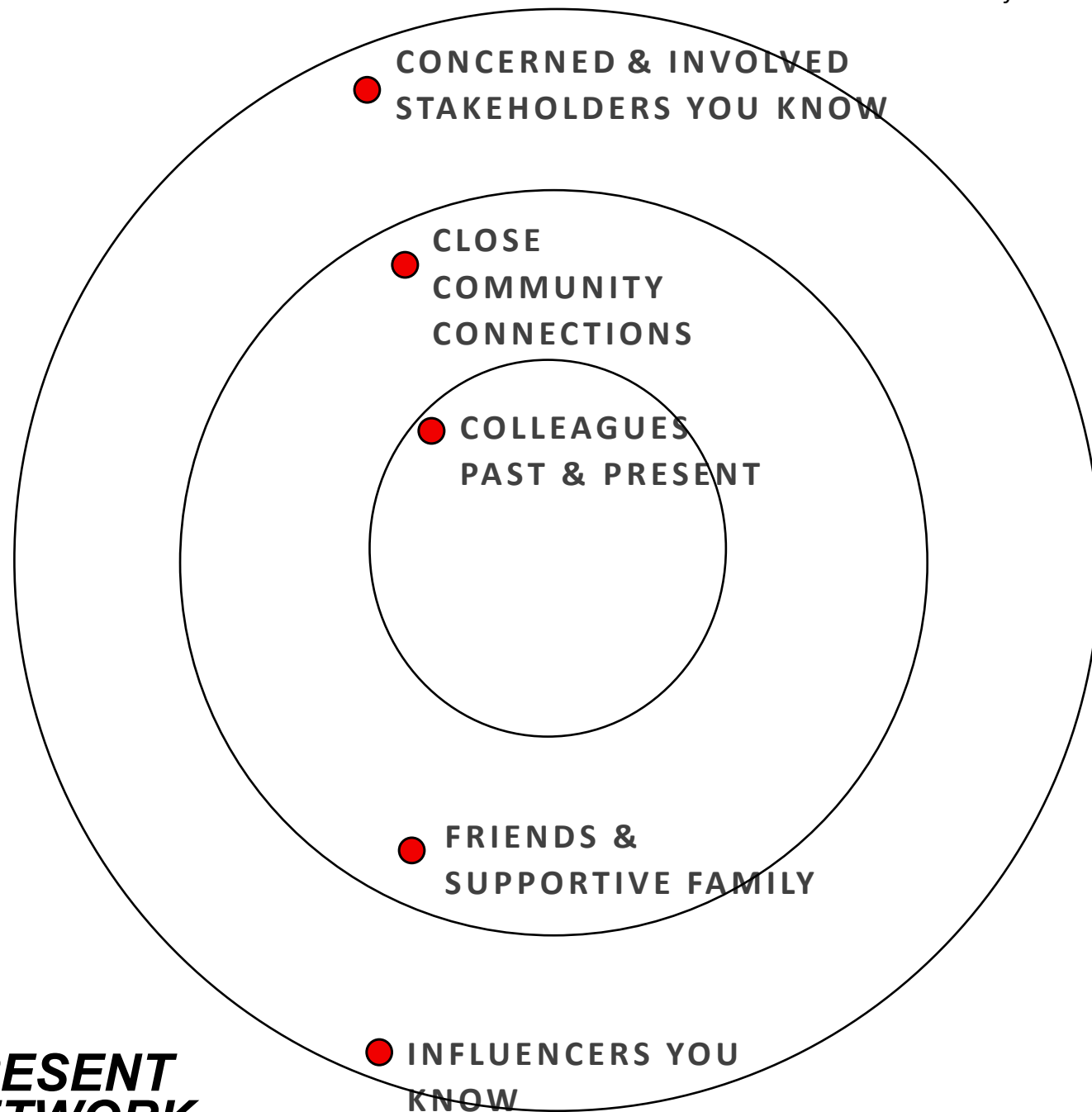
OPTION 3:

# WORKSHEET 3.1: MAP YOUR ECOSYSTEM

Today's date:

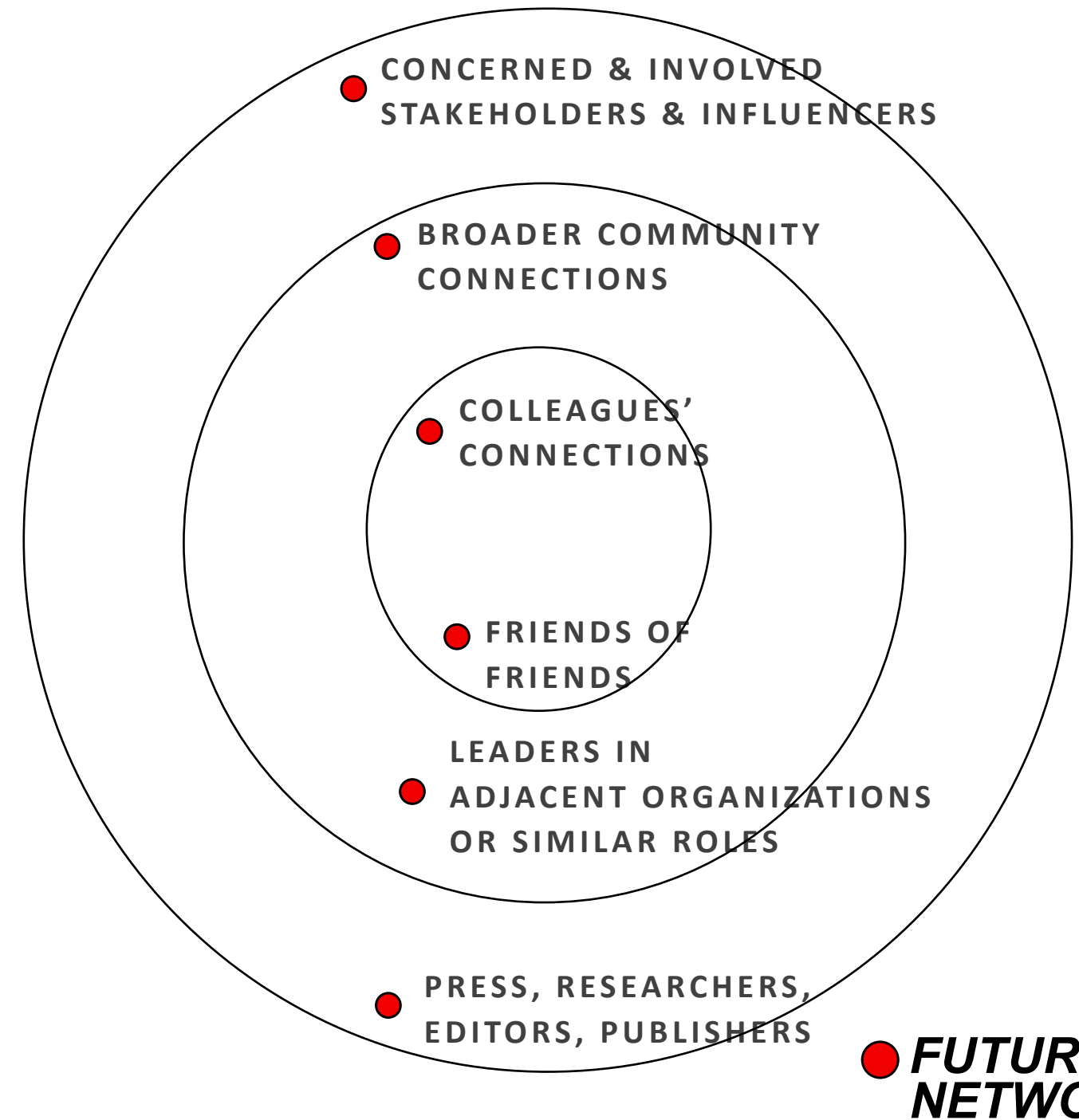
## WHO IS IN YOUR NETWORK?

*Whenever we start an initiative, we move more quickly when we can activate our existing network to get involved, give us feedback, etc. Who is in your network today?*



## WHO BELONGS IN YOUR NETWORK?

*The next step is to begin to reach beyond your existing network to identify other stakeholders with needed expertise, connections, a fresh perspective or a unique point of view.*



# WORKSHEET 3.2: WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

Today's date:

What motivates others to join your efforts? Once you understand the range of reasons for which someone might be willing to join your camp, you can use that information to craft the right message for your audiences and create the "marketing" materials that speak to their concerns and desires. Addressing what's in it for them is an important part of your message. Here are descriptions of some of the most common and powerful motivators, with reflection questions for you.

## ALTRUISM:

Just as you have an interest in leaving a legacy that matters, many others are inspired to align with or support an idea or cause, they believe in not for personal gain but for the greater good. *To what altruistic tendencies could you appeal to get people on board with your efforts? What's the big vision that can inspire them to engage with your efforts?*

## SHARED POINT OF VIEW:

Some people are willing to give their time, money, energy, and connections to something if you can assure them, it will help bring about a much better future world. *How can you find others who are already aligned to the cause you have under way? How can you enroll them to be one of the game-changers who will help to bring it about?*

## SKILL-BUILDING:

Many people, at all stages of their career, are interested in gaining new skills. *What sort of learning opportunities can you offer others in relation to your project?*

## CREDIBILITY & REPUTATION/SOCIAL CAPITAL:

If you affiliate with those with a strong reputation, established credibility and/or celebrity from the beginning, others will want to join your efforts simply to align to those already involved. *Who can you get on board that would help you establish your credibility from the get-go? How could you build your cachet in order to attract followers?*

**INNOVATION:** Some people are naturally early adopters: they will get involved in whatever is new and potentially the next big thing. *What is innovative or wow! about what you're doing? How can you let others—including early adopters and large entities in search of innovation—in on it?*

## MEDIA ATTENTION:

When you make a real difference in your city, community, or company, you will likely attract considerable media attention. Using that press attention strategically to showcase those who are involved can increase their interest in participating. *How could you use press attention to showcase your partners?*

## BUSINESS CONSIDERATIONS:

People will champion your efforts if you can help them figure out how they can make (or save) money or gain access to needed resources if they get involved. This doesn't have to be a quid pro quo (do this and you'll get that). There are more subtle ways to approach potential partnerships. *How could people make money, find clients, or gain needed resources by aligning with what you have under way?*

# WORKSHEET 3.3: OVERCOME OBJECTIONS

Today's date:

<p>Most thought leaders are trying to change people's mindsets AND their behaviors. To do that, we have to overcome others' objections and bring them on board. Use this worksheet to begin to think through how you'll go about this in the weeks and months ahead.</p>	<p><b>POINT OF VIEW:</b></p> <p>Your point of view is a combination of your attitude, perspective, beliefs and feelings. Others who share your point of view will likely become your followers. Use the space below to outline your point of view and who might share your perspective and who might not.</p>	<p><b>WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL FLAWS IN YOUR ARGUMENT? (TO BE SURE...)</b></p> <p>When you acknowledge the potential flaws in your own argument or address any obvious counter-arguments up front, people know you can see both sides while still having a clear point of view. You'll also be less on the defensive when others begin to poke holes in your ideas. Below, jot down a few potential flaws or counter-arguments and how you will acknowledge and address them.</p>
<p><b>WHY MIGHT PEOPLE DISAGREE WITH ME?</b></p> <p>Research shows that if we don't honor and respect where people are today, we will never bring them over to our side. This starts with empathy and understanding rather than shame and ridicule. Take a moment to think about why people might disagree with you or be working against your goals.</p>	<p><b>TOPICS TO AVOID:</b></p> <p>Another way we can push people away is by bringing up hot-button topics that are unrelated to our work. What hot-button topics will you avoid in order to assure the most followers for your work? (ex: politics, religion, etc.)</p>	
<p><b>ASSESS YOUR LANGUAGE:</b></p> <p>Sometimes we can push people away with the language we use. When we choose to be inflammatory or focus on being right versus being effective, we can lose potential supporters. Think about what neutral language you could use to show that you respect people who disagree with you.</p>		



# WORKSHEET 3.4: MESSAGE TEMPLATE

Today's date:

<p>Defining a message that clearly articulates your point of view and engages people to get on board is one of the most important activities of your thought-leadership journey. Use this template to think through what you want to say and how to address the questions others might ask. There is an example on the following page to help guide your efforts.</p>	<h2>AUDIENCES</h2> <p>Who are your audiences/constituencies?</p> <p>Why should your target audience(s) get involved?</p> <p>Why might your target audiences not get involved?</p>	<h2>SPOKEN MESSAGE</h2> <p>What are the top three key messages that you/your team want to convey? For each message, what are the proof points (research, data, past successes, user stories) that clarify and verify what you are saying?</p> <p>FIRST MESSAGE:</p> <p>Proof points :</p> <p>SECOND MESSAGE:</p> <p>Proof points:</p> <p>THIRD MESSAGE:</p> <p>Proof points:</p>
<h2>ISSUE</h2> <p>What idea are you/your team trying to communicate?</p>	<h2>INFLUENCERS</h2> <p>What stakeholders or constituencies influence your audiences?</p>	<h2>FAQs</h2> <p>What questions are people likely to ask? What objections will they have to you/your team's ideas or point of view? What are the best responses to those questions?</p>
<h2>SUMMARY</h2> <p>Summarize the idea in one sentence:</p>	<p>Who has to be on board for your stakeholders or constituents to believe in or begin to align with your efforts?</p>	
<h2>OBJECTIVE</h2> <p>Why are you/your team trying to increase awareness of this idea? What do you want to occur as a result of raising awareness?</p>	<p><i>Keep in mind that this is just a starting point. Regularly re-think your messaging and how changing circumstances might impact how it is received.</i></p>	
<h2>UNSPOKEN MESSAGE</h2> <p>What are you/your team trying to convey without saying it out loud? This is the hidden or underlying message to your communication that may not be as widely accepted if you put it in so many words.</p>		

# WORKSHEET 3.4a: MESSAGE TEMPLATE: EXAMPLE

Today's date:

<p>NOTE: This was our message when the organization I started, the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs, co-hosted the first Springboard Venture Conference in Silicon Valley in 2000 for women entrepreneurs.</p>	<h2>AUDIENCES</h2> <p>Who are your audiences/constituencies?  <b>investors, bankers, lawyers, accountants, and others who are part of the ecosystem of entrepreneurial businesses, as well as women entrepreneurs who might apply to participate in the program</b></p> <p>Why should your target audience(s) get involved?  <b>Investors will find companies to invest in. Bankers, lawyers, and accountants will find potential clients. Women entrepreneurs will find the resources and training they need to be successful, as well as media attention for their businesses. All of the participants will be a part of changing the road map for women entrepreneurs.</b></p> <p>Why might your target audiences not get involved?  <b>Women have not traditionally sought or received venture capital; it is hard to break into the "old boys' network" of venture capital; "this has never been done before" thinking.</b></p>	<h2>SPOKEN MESSAGE</h2> <p>What are the top three key messages that you/your team want to convey? For each message, what are the proof points (research, data, past successes, user stories) that clarify and verify what you are saying?</p> <p><b>FIRST MESSAGE:</b>  <b>Sponsored by [a list of top sponsors], FWE, and the National Women's Business Council (NWBC), Springboard is the first venture conference for women entrepreneurs.</b></p> <p><b>Proof points :</b> <b>Data about the history and successes of FWE and NWBC.</b></p> <p><b>SECOND MESSAGE:</b>  <b>The time for this event has come; women are poised to grow large, successful businesses if provided the right capital and support.</b></p> <p><b>Proof points:</b> <b>Data and statistics about the growth and potential of women entrepreneurs.</b></p> <p><b>THIRD MESSAGE:</b>  <b>There are many great funding opportunities among the presenters; each one has been screened, vetted and prepped to grow.</b></p> <p><b>Proof points:</b> <b>Showcase the stories and past successes of the 27 women selected for the conference; highlight the unique process of selection.</b></p>
<h2>ISSUE</h2> <p><i>What idea are you/your team trying to communicate?</i>  <b>Women entrepreneurs receive less than 3 percent of the venture capital funding in the United States. This is primarily due to their lack of access to fundraising information, role models, and resource providers, as well as connections to funding sources. The Springboard Venture Conference will be the first venture conference exclusively for women entrepreneurs. It will provide a select group of twenty-five women running life science and technology companies with three months of coaching on their businesses, and then provide them access to the top angel and venture investors in the United States.</b></p>	<h2>INFLUENCERS</h2> <p>What stakeholders or constituencies influence your audiences?  <b>This would have included a list of all of our sponsors, advisory committee, and funders—all big brand names that everyone had heard of.</b></p> <p>Who has to be on board for your stakeholders or constituents to believe in or begin to align with your efforts?  <b>The key players in the ecosystem – the banks, law firms, accounting firms and the top investment funds – must be involved for this event to be credible. It needs to be hosted at a well-known location, preferably at a prominent company's headquarters. Pre-event media coverage needs to be from top name publications. Brand has to look fresh and high quality.</b></p>	<h2>FAQs</h2> <p>What questions are people likely to ask? What objections will they have to you/your team's ideas or point of view? What are the best responses to those questions?  <b>Here I would include the answers to questions like:</b></p> <p><i>Why should I support Springboard?</i>  <i>Has a program like this been done before?</i>  <i>Why aren't you doing a co-ed event?</i>  <i>How did you select the women who are presenting?</i>  <i>What investors are involved?</i>  <i>What sponsors are involved?</i>  <i>How much does it cost? Can I attend?</i></p>
<h2>SUMMARY</h2> <p><i>Summarize the idea in one sentence:</i>  <b>Springboard is the first venture conference for women entrepreneurs and will provide all of the resources needed to overcome women's barriers to raising venture capital for their businesses.</b></p>	<p><i>Keep in mind that this is just a starting point. Regularly re-think your messaging and how changing circumstances might impact how it is received.</i></p>	
<h2>OBJECTIVE</h2> <p><i>Why are you/your team trying to increase awareness of this idea? What do you want to occur as a result of raising awareness?</i>  <b>The mission of the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs (FWE) is to increase the success of women who start and lead venture-fundable businesses. The Springboard event will be cohosted by FWE and the National Women's Business Council and will raise awareness of our organization and the issues we care about, and improve the statistics of women raising venture funding.</b></p>		
<h2>UNSPOKEN MESSAGE</h2> <p><i>What are you/your team trying to convey without saying it out loud? This is the hidden or underlying message to your communication that may not be as widely accepted if you put it in so many words.</i>  <b>No one believes women entrepreneurs are building, or are capable of building, venture-fundable businesses, and we are going to prove them wrong.</b></p>		

# WORKSHEET 4.1: BUILD YOUR PERSONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Today's date:

Everyone needs a team of people – a Personal Board of Directors (PBD) – who can provide support for their thought leadership journey. These are the people you can call when faced with day-to-day decisions, crossroads and challenges. You might ask for their insight on your ideas and point of view as well as for feedback on a blog post or speech. Often, our ideas and arguments are strengthened when we can test them with trusted insiders.

The members of your PBD don't necessarily know they're on your board, and you won't necessarily call all of them every time you need advice. However, having a PBD can be critical to your success as a thought leader. Think about which more experienced thought leaders, trusted colleagues or experts in your niche might be willing to share their knowledge and weigh in on your efforts. You might also want a few vendors (editors, ghostwriters) who can connect you with needed resources and who you can hire when you're ready to finalize content. These folks may not have a seat at the table, but they can certainly be of great help.

**WHO HAS A SEAT AT YOUR BOARD TABLE? (ADD THEIR NAMES OR INITIALS TO EACH SEAT.)**

The diagram shows a central rectangular table with a light gray background. There are 14 empty square boxes representing seats around the table: five along the top edge, five along the bottom edge, one on the left side, and one on the right side.

WHAT ARE 3 WAYS YOUR PERSONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS CAN HELP IN THE YEAR AHEAD?

WHAT OTHER TYPES OF PEOPLE DO YOU NEED ON YOUR PBD?

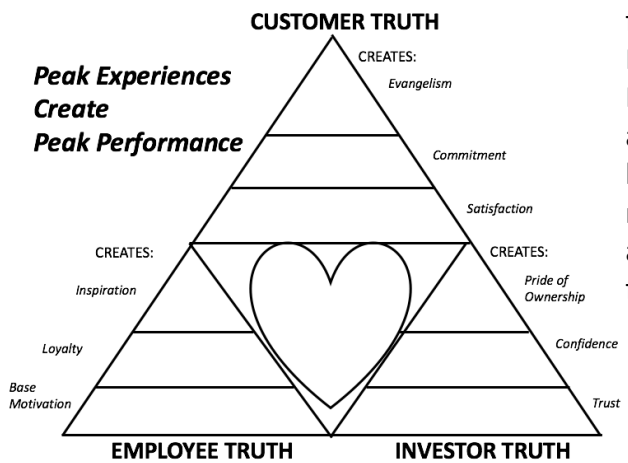
WHAT ARE 3 ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO BUILD YOUR PERSONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS THIS YEAR?

*Revisit your Personal Board of Directors from time to time. Board members may come and go.*

# WORKSHEET 5.1: DEVELOP A VISUAL FRAMEWORK

Today's date:

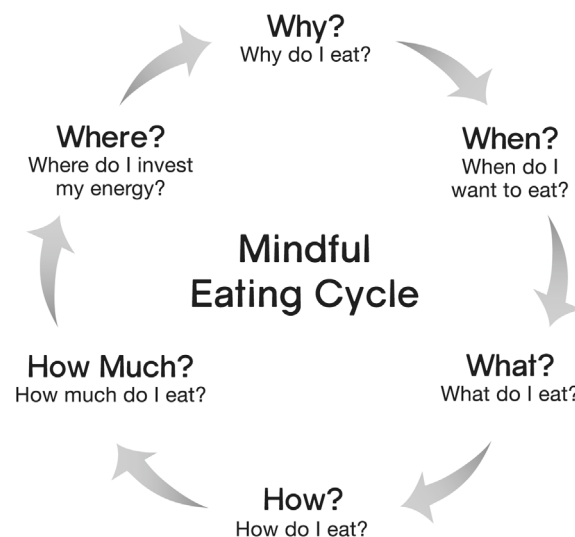
The essential difference between leaders and thought leaders is often the latter's ability to distill their know-how into a replicable model so that others can be inspired and empowered to expand on what they have accomplished. Not every framework, methodology, or set of best practices will lend itself to a graphic, pictorial, or visual representation, but if you can find a way to represent your ideas in a simple, visual way, you'll go a long way toward engaging followers and explaining your ideas. Most people are visual learners—they learn more quickly with their eyes than their ears. Think of yourself as a visual storyteller: you can show as well as tell others your ideas.



Chip Conley, founder and former CEO of Joie de Vivre Hotels, developed a detailed framework, based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which guided his actions as he turned his hotel business around in the midst of a downturn. This is a simplified version of that framework.

Reproduced with permission. Chip Conley, *PEAK: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo From Maslow*, Wiley.

Dr. Michelle May created a simple visual image to help individuals struggling with mindless and emotional eating gain awareness of their patterns.

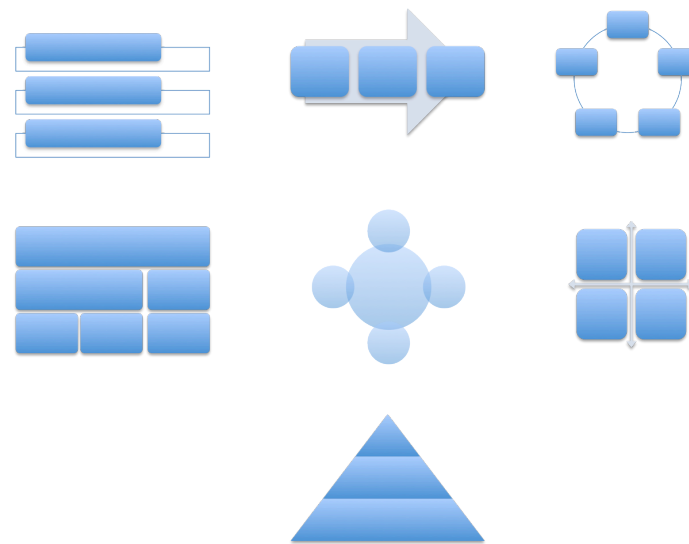


## LIST THE STEPS

In the space below, list the steps or elements in the framework you would like to depict.

## SELECT AN IMAGE

Are the steps listed above best depicted as a list, process, or cycle? As a hierarchy, items in relationship to one another, or a matrix? Or would a pyramid be best? For inspiration, look at the SmartArt menu in PowerPoint which has a huge variety of options, or use your favorite search engine to look for existing images of frameworks or methodologies.



## TEST, TEST, TEST

Use the space below to present your ideas in a variety of ways and then test those images with different people—those who already know what you're talking about, and those who don't. Which images do people respond to? This is an iterative process that takes tweaking. (Alternatively, hire a graphic artist you know or hire one through an online marketplace of freelance designers, such as Upwork).

## NAME, DOCUMENT AND PROTECT YOUR FRAMEWORK

Once you're satisfied that you have the right framework, find a great name for it (see book page 139), create some documentation to explain it, and then think through how you will protect it (e.g., copyright). Use this space to jot down next steps. (see book page 141).

# WORKSHEET 6.1: DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE(S)

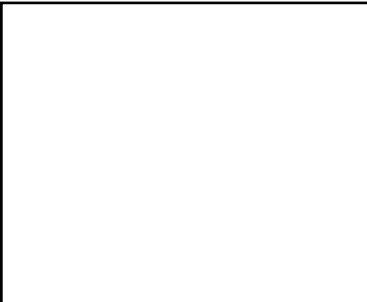
Today's date:

<p>Researching and defining your audience(s) is the most effective way to gear your thought leadership efforts to their needs and interests. You may have several different target audiences that have little overlap or there might be only subtle differences between the audiences you are targeting. Use these questions to guide your research; use multiple sheets as needed. Skip questions that don't apply.</p>	<p><b>GOALS:</b> What are their aspirations? What are they hoping to achieve?</p>	<p><b>MESSAGE THAT RESONATES:</b> What messaging/language/story will best speak to their needs?</p>
<p><b>AUDIENCE:</b></p>	<p><b>CHALLENGES:</b> What stands in their way to achieving these goals? What keeps them up at night?</p>	<p><b>OBJECTIONS:</b> Identify the most likely objection this audience will have to your message or to getting involved with your organization or your efforts?</p>
<p><b>KEY CHARACTERISTICS:</b> What are the key identifiers of this audience? How do you differentiate this audience from other groups?</p>	<p><b>HOW YOU HELP:</b> In what ways do you help them overcome their challenges and/or achieve their goals? What's in it for them to be involved with your efforts?</p>	<p><b>ECOSYSTEM:</b> Who is in this person's ecosystem? Whom do they trust and rely on for information?</p>
<p><b>BACKGROUND/DEMOGRAPHICS :</b> What is their personal and/or professional background? What is their typical lifestyle, interests, hobbies and education? What is their age range, gender, household income? Where do they live (e.g., urban vs. suburban vs. rural)?</p>		

# WORKSHEET 6.2: DEFINE YOUR AVATARS

Today's date:

Once you have identified the audience(s) you'd like to target, think about a specific person (either someone you know or know about) that exemplifies this audience. Do you have an existing client, customer, colleague, champion, or stakeholder that is a good representative? Are they typical of others that you might want to attract, engage with or serve? If so, then they would be a good example to use as an 'avatar' to represent the whole group. If not, do some research, ask others for recommendations of possible candidates. Once you've identified someone to be your 'avatar,' complete the description below. The more details you know or can find out about this person, the better. Use multiple sheets as needed. Skip questions that don't apply.



Add a descriptive name and image that brings them to mind.

**NAME:**  
**AGE/RANGE:**  
**POSITION/ROLE:**  
**TYPE OF ORGANIZATION:**

**DESCRIBE THEM:**

(What interest or habit makes them unique and memorable?)

**KEY ATTRIBUTES:**  
(Identify key attributes that define them )

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**INFO SOURCES:**  
(What do they read/watch/listen to?)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**WHAT ARE THEIR TOP 3 CHALLENGES?**

---

---

---

---

---

**HOW DO YOU HELP THEM SOLVE THOSE CHALLENGES?**

---

---

---

---

---



# WORKSHEET 6.3b: BRAND VOICE SUMMARY SHEET

Today's date:

Often as thought leaders, we want to hire a ghostwriter to help us tell our story. To help them gain an understanding of our brand voice, it helps to complete this worksheet and share it with them. Feel free to expand on this on additional sheets. See the next page for an example.

## WORDS THAT DESCRIBE MY BRAND VOICE

CHARACTER/PERSONA:

TONE:

LANGUAGE:

PURPOSE:

## WORDS THAT DON'T DESCRIBE MY BRAND VOICE

CHARACTER/PERSONA:

TONE:

LANGUAGE:

PURPOSE:

## AUDIENCES

My audience demographic:

How I tend to describe my audience:

## CONTENT TITLES THAT FIT AND WHY:

Here are five possible titles of articles I might write and why they fit my brand voice.

Here are five titles that do not fit and why:

*Keep in mind that this is just a starting point. Regularly re-think your brand voice and how changing circumstances might impact how it is received.*

## EXAMPLES OF TEXT EXCERPTS:

Here are three text excerpts that fit my brand voice and why: (include links to where this text appears in your written content)

Here are three text excerpts that don't fit my brand voice and why: (include links to where this text appeared in someone else's writing)

## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

Add additional information on your brand voice, approach, purpose.



Often as thought leaders, we want to hire a ghostwriter to help us tell our story. To help them gain an understanding of our brand voice, it helps to complete this worksheet and share it with them. Feel free to expand on this on additional sheets.

## WORDS THAT DESCRIBE MY BRAND VOICE

**CHARACTER/PERSONA:**

Passionate, Disruptive, Scrappy, Curious, Authentic

**TONE:**

Personal, Unapologetically Human, Relatable, Edgy, Playful, Provocative, Real

**LANGUAGE:**

Conversational, Accessible, Fresh, Unexpected

**PURPOSE:**

Engage, Educate, Shift Mindset, Inspire, Motivate

## WORDS THAT DON'T DESCRIBE MY BRAND VOICE

**CHARACTER/PERSONA:**

Not: Pretentious, Academic, Elitist, Snobby, Unapproachable

**TONE:**

Not: Preachy, Careful, Boring

**LANGUAGE:**

Not: Overwritten, Cliché, Self-Doubting, Chatty, Dramatic, Sexy, Empty

**PURPOSE:**

Not: Overwhelm, Shame, Patronize

## AUDIENCES

My audience demographic:

Paul's readership demographic is 35 to 55-year-old full-time employees in mid- to large-size companies who are stuck in the busy track and want to find a way to reinvent themselves and reclaim their time. Even incremental change feels radical for this group.

How I tend to describe my audience:

"I want to inspire and educate people to change their lives by reinventing themselves where they are, instead of quitting their jobs," says Paul. "I want to say, 'You can do this within your organization, and here are the things you can do to change yourself, your team, and your organization to serve your customers.'"

## CONTENT TITLES THAT FIT AND WHY:

Here are three possible titles of articles I might write and why they fit my brand voice.

- **The Most Important Question of Your Life** [leaves reader feeling curious, wanting to engage more]
- **In Defense of Being Average** [unexpected idea, fresh, human, relatable]
- **Reskill or Die: Why Your Future Depends On It** [edgy, unexpected]

Here are three titles that do not fit and why:

- The Gig Mindset: My #HitRefresh Moment** [Not relatable. Uses two clichés. Doesn't explain why someone should care about the Gig Mindset .]
- #Death to Meetings: My 5 Commitments, and Why You Should Change, Too** ["My 5 Commitments to what? Vague promise, and hard for a reader to identify with. ]
- Gig Mindset: How I reclaimed 8 days this year (plus 50 task ideas so you can too!)** – [Title is saying too many things. Too many ideas, too many numbers].

## EXAMPLES OF TEXT EXCERPTS:

Here are three text excerpts that fit my brand voice and why: (include links to where this text appears in your written content) NOTE: Only had room on this sheet for 2 – you would add 3 or more as well as examples of what doesn't work.

**In Defense of Being Average**

[Fun, edgy, engaging.]

"There's this guy. World-renowned billionaire. Tech genius. Inventor and entrepreneur. Athletic and talented and handsome with a jaw so chiseled it looks like Zeus came down from Olympus and carved the fucker himself."

[<https://markmanson.net/being-average>]

**In the Future, Our Attention Will be Sold**

[Relatable, provocative.]

Last week, I logged onto Facebook to see a story about a man who got drunk, cut off his friend's penis and then fed it to a dog. This was followed by a story of a 100-year-old woman who had never seen the ocean before. Then eight ways I can totally know I'm a 90's kid. Then 11 steps to make me a "smarter Black Friday shopper," an oxymoron if I ever saw one. This is life now: one constant, never-ending stream of non sequiturs and self-referential garbage that passes in through our eyes and out of our brains at the speed of a touchscreen.

[<https://markmanson.net/attention>]

## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

Add additional information on your brand voice, approach, purpose.

- "The number one thing I want to do is make people think differently."
- "What I'm doing inside corporate culture is disruptive to people. We are asking people for radical transformation."
- "I want to tell personal human stories. I want to tell stories about people who are reinventing themselves and use those stories to engage people."

*There are multiple venues for sharing your ideas and expertise. Selecting the right one is a combination of understanding where your audiences expect to find you and identifying those that are a fit with your strategy. Use this and the next worksheet to select some target channels or venues. Then, you'll need to hone your skills to be at your best -- either in written form, on video, in the press, on the stage or online. When you can establish yourself as the credible, trusted resource then others will look to you as the 'go to' person in your field or niche.*

## SET YOUR STRATEGY

*What is your plan of action that will help you achieve your overall aim? Select from the options below or write your own.*

**VALIDATE:** Regularly test and validate my ideas.

**REPLICATE:** Train and encourage people to carry my ideas to others.

**CHANGE MINDS:** Provide information and stories that will engage others to adopt new perspectives.

**BUILD FOLLOWERSHIP:** Increase the number of people who follow me.

**LEARNING COMMUNITY:** Build a community of followers that learns from each other and shares ideas regularly.

**EXPAND REACH:** Connect to a broader audience in my organization, community or within the general public.

**GATHER STORIES:** Create connections with my tribe in order to gather their stories or testimonials.

**BUILD TRUST:** Showcase my expertise and add value in ways that build my credibility and increase trust.

**FIND ADVOCATES:** Connect with the most well-known and respected thought leaders in my industry or niche.

**STAY TOP OF MIND:** Regularly re-connect with people who might need my expertise or can refer me to others.

**ADD YOUR OWN:** \_\_\_\_\_

## SELECT YOUR COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

### STRATEGY #1:

Select one strategy and think about which channels/venues (see worksheet 6.5) might best allow you to achieve this.

- 
- 

Which one or two of these channels/mediums do you feel most comfortable in?

- 
- 

What skills will you need to develop or hone in order to be most effective in this channel or venue?

- 
- 
- 

What resources/tools/consultants might you use to help?

- 
- 

How will you get started? What's one small step you can take today?

- 
- 
- 

### STRATEGY #2:

Select a second strategy and think about which channels/venues might best allow you to achieve this. (See worksheet 6.5)

- 
- 

Which one or two of these channels/mediums do you feel most comfortable in?

- 
- 

What skills will you need to develop or hone in order to be most effective in this channel or venue?

- 
- 
- 

What resources/tools/consultants might you use to help?

- 
- 

How will you get started? What's one small step you can take today?

- 
- 
- 

## LEARN FROM YOUR "COMPETITORS"

*Sometimes the best way to devise a winning strategy is to see what others are doing and work to imitate them.*

Where do your 'competitors' tend to be found online?

- 
- 
- 

What actions do they take that get them the most engagement?

- 
- 
- 

Where do your 'competitors' tend to engage with their communities?

- 
- 
- 

What conferences/events do your 'competitors' attend or keynote?

- 
- 
-

# WORKSHEET 6.5: CHOOSE YOUR CHANNELS

Today's date:

*There are a variety of channels and mediums for sharing your message. Review the options below and select a few that might be a fit for your content, skillset, and strategy. Feel free to add your own.*

## SPECIFIC:

## TAILORED/TARGETED:

## BROAD:

<b>ORAL:</b>	1 to 1 conversation		Radio	News/TV Interview
	Megaphone on a street corner	Podcast	Pop Music	
		Teaching a class	PSA	
<b>BLENDED:</b>	Internal organizational presentation	Workshop	Panel	Online Class
	Conference presentation	Licensable Curriculum	Webinar	TED Talk
			Facebook Live	YouTube video or speech
<b>WRITTEN:</b>	Email	Industry Newsletter/Email	Bumper Sticker	Social media article/post
	Hand-written letter	Industry Publication Piece	Conference Paper	Newspaper or Magazine Article or Column
	Cartoon		Research Paper	Blog post
			Post on Medium	Opinion Piece in Newspaper
			Book	Graffiti
			Billboard	Billboard
				Graphic Novel
				Dropping pamphlets from an airplane
				Social media status update
				Your Own Website
				Article on well-trafficked site

# WORKSHEET 6.6: SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN

Week of:

*There are several techniques you can use to begin to build a following on social media.. Three I recommend are spokesperson (sharing your ideas), amplifier (highlighting the best ideas of well-established players in your niche) and supporter (highlight new voices). Every week, think about the key themes, viewpoints, ideas that are relevant and how you will share them.*

**SPOKESPERSON: SHARE YOUR EXPERTISE/IDEAS**

Articles, videos, lessons learned, ideas about the future, upcoming events, themes..

**AMPLIFIER: CURATE THE MOST RELEVANT CONTENT/IDEAS/EVENTS**

Highlight the best of the best in your niche or movement. Who do you agree with? Disagree with?

**SUPPORTER: BRING FORWARD NEW VOICES**

Quotes, interviews, new perspectives. How can you share your microphone?

**SOCIAL CHANNEL 1:**

**SOCIAL CHANNEL 2:**

**SOCIAL CHANNEL 3:**


*Be sure to use appropriate hashtags, credit anyone you quote or any images you use, make sure the ratio is no more than 1/3 your own content. Observe others with large followings to figure out what they are doing that works. Choose the social media channels where your audience congregates and focus your time there. Customize content to fit the medium -- will people most often read this on a phone or computer? Is visual or text more common on this channel? Can you provide content across modes – podcast, video, articles, etc.?*

# WORKSHEET 7.1: SET GOALS TO MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS

Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

## SETTING GOALS

*The journey from leader to well-respected thought leader does not happen overnight. We must simultaneously build our credibility, eminence and followership. To stay motivated and on track, it's best to develop a few goal posts along the way. Below is a list of potential outcomes. Select up to three goals from the list below that you will track moving forward. Then determine how you'll know you are making headway, what support you'll need, and how you'll celebrate your progress.*

**Email list:** Grow the number of people on my email list.

**Followership:** Grow the number of people following me online.

**Attendees:** Grow the number of people attending my talks or events.

**Audiences:** Increase the number of speaking engagements, types venues and types of audiences I speak with.

**Amplify others:** Amplify the efforts of others in my niche by sharing their ideas and content.

**Being amplified:** Others are commenting on, liking, and sharing my content online and off.

**Stories:** I have well-honed success stories and testimonials that serve as proof points.

**Advocates:** I have well-placed advocates who speak on my behalf.

**Personal board:** I have a network or personal board of directors that supports me.

**Press coverage:** I am quoted or mentioned in the press..

**Adoption:** My framework or ideas are being quoted, cited, and adopted by others.

**Engagement:** My followers are engaged and expanding the community through their efforts.

**Referrals:** People I know refer others to me regularly.

**Money:** I am making money with my ideas and expertise.

**Add your own:**

## GOAL #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Select your first goal from those on the left (or write your own) and describe how you will know you are making progress.

- 
- 
- 
- 

What support might you need?

- 
- 
- 

How will you celebrate your progress?

- 
- 
- 

## GOAL #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Select your second goal from those on the left (or write your own) and describe how you will know you are making progress.

- 
- 
- 
- 

What support might you need?

- 
- 
- 

How will you celebrate your progress?

- 
- 
- 

## GOAL #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Select your third goal from those on the left (or write your own) and describe how you will know you are making progress.

- 
- 
- 
- 

What support might you need?

- 
- 
- 

How will you celebrate your progress?

- 
- 
- 

## TOOLS:

There are a lot of tools for measuring your progress and tracking activity in your niche. Here are a few you might explore:

**Google Alert:** Track mentions of any word or phrase, including your name, niche, key phrases, etc. (<https://www.google.com/alerts>)

**Google Keywords:** Use to identify and track keywords that are popular in your niche. (<http://bit.ly/GoogleKeywordsTools>)

**Epictions:** Find out who is talking in your niche and what topics are getting shared. (<http://www.epictions.com/epicbeat>)

**LinkedIn Social Selling Index:** See how LinkedIn ranks your brand, network and engagement. (<http://bit.ly/LinkedInSocialSellingIndex>)

**Hootsuite:** Track social mentions of your name or your Twitter or other social handles. (<https://hootsuite.com/>)

## ASSESSMENT

Thought leadership is made up of a lot of different building blocks; you may find you've already made considerable headway in some areas, while in others you are just beginning. Below is an assessment matched with each of the steps and chapters in the book; it will give you a baseline of where you stand today as well as an overview of what you'll be learning in each step.

### CHAPTER 1: FIND YOUR DRIVING PASSION

- I can clearly define my thought leadership niche—where I want to be the recognized “go to” person.
- I have a clear view of the future that I'd like to see and bring about.
- I focus on big ideas that inspire and engage others.
- I understand the key trends in my industry or field and align my efforts with those trends.

### CHAPTER 2: BUILD YOUR RIPPLES OF INFLUENCE

- I am able to distill my knowledge, know-how, or past experiences into the kernel of a transformative idea.
- I test my thinking regularly, even newly hatched ideas, in order to find and build even bigger possibilities.
- I have a loyal group of friends, colleagues, or coworkers, past and present, that can and will help me test and implement a new project or initiative.
- I participate in many forums where I can exchange ideas with a wide variety of people inside and outside my organization; I regularly listen to others' points of view and lessons learned and integrate them with my own.

### CHAPTER 3: ACTIVATE YOUR ADVOCATES

- I have built a program, project, product, or initiative that has the potential to scale beyond what I can do on my own.
- I enjoy and have the skills to enroll others to adopt my vision of the future and join my team.
- I understand how to build incremental engagement—not just to bring people on board but to get them to advocate my position.
- I have many well-known and well-respected advocates willing to champion my point of view broadly, and I am effective at activating them.

### CHAPTER 4: PUT YOUR “I” ON THE LINE

- I believe my ideas are worth sharing.
- I am comfortable stepping into the limelight; I'm not afraid to speak up and share what I know in public forums (in person and online).
- I will risk my reputation, if necessary, to move my ideas or the needs of the community I stand for forward.
- I have put in place support structures to help me move forward despite any naysayers, credit-stealers, and personal challenges that may arise.

### CHAPTER 5: CODIFY YOUR LESSONS LEARNED

- I have distilled my experiences and crafted them as universal life lessons that can inform, inspire, and catalyze others to take action.
- I have developed a blueprint, methodology, or framework that others can follow to replicate what I have achieved.
- I have measurable, actionable, and verifiable evidence that proves my ideas are valid and can be replicated.

- I have tested, iterated, and packaged my blueprint into intellectual property that assures its successful replication.
- I have protected my intellectual property with licenses, trademarks, copyrights, or other safeguards in order to maintain the integrity of what's been created.

### CHAPTER 6: PUT YOURSELF ON S.H.O.U.T.

- I have honed my writing and speaking skills so that people want to listen to and get on board with what I have under way.
- I have followers that I communicate with regularly (email, newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) to share resources and lessons learned in order to scale my efforts and initiatives.
- I think about and manage my personal and social brand and guarantee that I am “discoverable.”
- I have a book, white paper, talk, blog, or website where my ideas are codified and through which I inspire others to get on board.
- I attend or convene meetings, roundtables, or conferences, and I speak and network with potential clients, customers, and even critics.

### CHAPTER 7: INCITE (R)EVOLUTION

- I regularly audit my impact to see who is commenting, forwarding, re-tweeting, or adopting my point of view.
- I see evolutionary and even revolutionary transformation that has come about as a result of my efforts and those of my followers.
- I have identified ways to pass the baton to fans and followers (books, licensed programs, train the trainers, legislation, or regulations).
- I regularly rest and renew to ensure that I don't burn out.



# READY TO BE A THOUGHT LEADER? TOOLKIT



The Ready to Be a Thought Leader? Toolkit is the actionable workbook that accompanies Ready to Be a Thought Leader?. Filled with exercises, checklists, and progress trackers, this is the ultimate workbook for any leader building their reputation and following as a thought leader.

Key exercises and elements from the Ready to Be a Thought Leader? Toolkit:

- Identify an arena where your interests, expertise, credibility, and commitment align
- Craft a compelling set of words or images that enrolls others in the future you envision
- Understand the context you are operating in and how to align to the top trends
- Identify your tribe – who you stand for and with
- Map your network and make a plan to expand that network each week
- Define a message that articulates your point of view and engages people to get on board

Denise Brosseau is a thought leadership strategist, professional speaker, lecturer and author. Her book, “Ready to Be a Thought Leader?” was published by Wiley/Jossey-Bass.

Denise is an adjunct faculty member at Stanford Business School and the CEO of Thought Leadership Lab, a boutique professional services firm where she consults with executives and CEOs on building their credibility, expanding their influence and establishing themselves and their organizations as thought leaders.

Previously, she co-founded the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs (now Watermark), Invent Your Future Enterprises and Springboard, the prestigious women’s startup launch pad that has led to over \$7 billion in funding for women entrepreneurs around the globe.

A Wellesley graduate with a Stanford MBA, Denise began her career in the high tech industry with marketing roles at Motorola, Broderbund, and Kensington. Today, she is a frequent speaker at universities, corporations, and conferences and her expertise has been featured in major media outlets, including Fast Company, Inc.com, UK Business Reporter and Salesforce.com. She has been recognized as a Champion of Change by the White House.